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### Disorders Among Iowa Inmates Higher Than Previously Assessed

A newly released study shows that the prevalence of mental health and substance abuse disorders among Iowa's inmate population is even higher than earlier findings indicated. Using the MINI-Plus assessment tool, University of Iowa researchers screened a randomly selected group of 320 incoming nonviolent offenders at IMCC from 2005 to 2007. DOC's Director of Mental Health Services, Dr. Bruce Sieleni, participated in the study.

Violent offenders and those requiring segregation or maximum security placement were excluded because they could not be easily moved into the testing area. The MINI-Plus assessment tool was used in the study because some instruments omit disorders that are relevant to the correctional population.

The U. of I. study found that more than 93 percent of the men and women met criteria for at least one lifetime psychiatric disorder and nearly two-thirds of the participants had had three or more disorders in their lifetimes. The most frequent disorders found were substance abuse and dependence (90 percent), followed by mood disorders such as depression, psychotic disorders, antisocial personality disorder, anxiety disorders such as panic, and attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder.

Approximately 85 percent of the men and 91 percent of the women met the criteria for a current disorder, with substance abuse or dependence within the last year being the most frequent. Close to 78 percent of male offenders experienced an alcohol-use disorder during their lifetime, compared to 55.3 percent for female offenders.

Despite the benefits of using the MINI-Plus, researchers concluded that it is not appropriate as a screening tool in prisons, due to its length, complexity, and requirement for interviewer training. However, its developers have devised a quick screener estimated to take five minutes to administer, which will be considered by DOC for future use.

The bottom line is that the challenge for us to provide evidence-based interventions for offenders with substance abuse and mental health disorders is even larger than previously thought.